

SI
Reports - Paulina

Portland, Oregon,
July 2, 1913.

MEMORANDUM FOR THE DISTRICT FORESTER

The accompanying memorandum by Mr. Munger has my entire approval, and expresses, I believe, the feelings of most of the men in the Office of Silviculture in regard to the proposed elimination of the lodgepole covered pumice lands in Crook and Klamath Counties.

In regard to the present stand of lodgepole timber, I believe that Mr. Munger's statements are conservative. It appears quite plain that only lack of transportation is now preventing use of that timber. The Supervisor of the Paulina Forest recently wrote as follows:

"I have had some correspondence relating to a proposed sale of lodgepole for use as telephone poles. With the coming of railroads into this section it is likely that all lodgepole fit for telephone poles can be sold since, with proper treatment, they are as good if not superior to cedar poles.....The cost of manufacture and transportation to railroad facilities, when the railroads are actually built into this country will be small."

There is no question, also, but what a market for lodgepole ties will develop with the coming of railroads. In other words, it is not the quality of the timber itself which is preventing its sale – it is lack of transportation.

I also endorse especially what Mr. Munger says in regard to the embarrassment to the administration of the Forest which the elimination of these lodgepole lands would cause.

(signed) F.A. AMES

SI
Reports - Paulina

June 28, 1913.

Memorandum for District Forester.

Concerning the suitability of holding as National Forest the lodgepole-covered pumice lands of Crook and Klamath Counties, Oregon.¹

¹The information and opinions expressed in this memorandum are based upon several official trips made by the writer in this region, during which much study and attention was given to the timber conditions of the region, its probable forestal and agricultural future and the economic problems which it presented. These visits were distributed through nearly every month of the year and aggregated 21 weeks, of which nearly three months were in continuous residence.

Introduction.

The land under discussion in this memorandum lies on the plateau at the eastern base of the Cascade Mountains, in southern Crook and northern Klamath Counties, at an elevation of 4000 to 4500 feet or thereabouts. The region has been so fully described elsewhere that more than bare mention of its local characteristics is unnecessary here. There are in the region really but three types – (1) the lowland type, which is natural meadow or lodgepole-covered lowland which borders the rivers and lakes, (2) the slope type, which occupies the side hills and ridges up to an elevation of 5500 feet or so and is commonly covered with a forest consisting largely of yellow pine, (3) the bench type, which occupies approximately level ground intermediate between the hills and the river bottoms, and is commonly covered with a pure stand of lodgepole pine, but occasionally is forested with yellow pine.

It is this last type to which the discussion in this memorandum will be confined, for it is these lodgepole covered flats concerning which there is not unanimous opinion as to their suitability for National Forest purposes. It is assumed, of course, that the elimination of any slope type land now covered with yellow pine is not contemplated, for the land has no pretension of being agricultural and has a very evident and definite forestal value.

Forestal Value of the Lodgepole Flats.

The forestal value of this lodgepole land may be considered under four heads: (a) Present value of the timber itself; (b) prospective value of the land for timber purposes; (c) value of the forest for watershed protection; (d) value of the forest in the administration of adjacent land.

(a) Present value of the timber itself: At the present time the lodgepole pine of this locality has practically no quick sale value. This is quite natural because no timber is being cut here for export, and for the small local demand there is a great superabundance of superior, cheap, yellow pine, and also because the present lodgepole forests are of a very decadent, inferior quality, due to their being repeatedly scourged by fires, which have induced poor forms of bole, butt rot and irregularly stocked stands. It is used locally for house logs, fencing, poles, bridges, etc., for all of these purposes it gives excellent service, but the demand for this class of material in this sparsely settled country is small. Where yellow pine is being cut in Forest Service timber sales, the lodgepole pine is cut also; its lumber is of fine texture, white and strong, and is solid in mixture with the yellow pine at the same price.

Although present economic conditions are such that the stands of pure lodgepole have no immediate sale value, because of their inaccessibility and the superabundance of better material they have a very real intrinsic value to the government which does not have to figure on taxes and high rates of interest.

In other regions good stands of lodgepole pine are being sold by the Forest Service for \$4.50 per thousand board feet. The market in the Rocky Mt. states is able to absorb a great deal of it, and it has been found to be excellent for a number of purposes.

The lodgepole of this Deschutes region has the advantage of being on level, smooth ground which is easily logged, and much of the area under discussion is close to the proposed railroads and to the Deschutes River which is a drivable stream. As soon as the market opens for this class of timber, these factors will give this timber an advantage over perhaps even better timber less fortunately situated. It is entirely conceivable, in fact it is inevitable, that with the coming of railroads to this region, with the exhaustion of the local yellow pine, with the countrywide demand for lumber and wood of every kind, and with the introduction of industries that can use lodgepole pine, there will be a ready sale for this pumice-land lodgepole. The country has been witnessing for the past thirty years a tremendously rapid transition in the attitude toward inferior timber trees. Hemlock which 25 years ago was classed as worthless, is now sold for \$5 a thousand. There is every reason for saying that the lodgepole of the region which is now sometimes classed as "worthless", will be worth within 20 years over a dollar a cord. In view of this inevitable future accretion in its sale value, this timber has now a very real present day value to the government. What a fair valuation is to place upon this lodgepole timber, is a matter of individual opinion, but I should place it at least at 25¢ a cord for the country that is within 6 miles of the Deschutes River or the proposed railroad lines.

(b) Prospective value of the land for timber purposes: It was mentioned above that the present pure lodgepole pine forest is in a very defective and unkempt condition, as are many virgin forests, due to periodic fires. The present forest is no indication of the potential timber producing capacity of this land; more timber per acre and much better lodgepole timber can be produced here than the virgin forest would indicate, if only such fire protection and management as the Forest Service is now giving is continued. Lodgepole pine's yields are large owing to the density of its stands and to its growth, which is by no means slow even on this pumice soil. It is estimated that under forest management, a yield of 100 board feet per acre per year can be counted upon. It is not too much to say, therefore, that before the end of the next forest rotation this land would yield a net revenue from its timber production alone, as are equally unpromising forest areas in Europe and the East doing now.

The question has been much agitated as to whether these pumice flats will bear yellow pine or ever did bear yellow pine. It is my opinion that they will, and that some areas now covered with pure lodgepole were once covered in part with yellow pine. But the question does not seem to me to be germane to the matter in hand, - the intrinsic value of this land for forest purposes. By the end of the next forest generation, a century hence, economic conditions will be such that a good thrifty stand of lodgepole will be as marketable as one of yellow pine. As a forest property, therefore, the land should be devoted to the production of the timber of which it will grow the most of the best quality, in the shortest time. Even if this land is ultimate lodgepole pine land, as are many of the

Rocky Mt. Forests, that seems to me to be no argument against its desirability as a forest property administered by the Federal government.

(c) Value of the forest for watershed protection: Since this region lies on flat land, the forest has no conspicuous influence, if any, on watershed protection. If the land were eliminated, it is natural to assume that a good deal of the lodgepole forest would be destroyed either by wanton forest fires or by clearing for attempted agriculture, and such clearing might have an effect upon the water table in the Walker Basin, or the flow of the Deschutes River to which the soil water in the Walker Basin is a great feeder, or on the climate; but such possible ill effects of the elimination of the land do not merit much consideration except as taken in connection with other arguments.

(d) Value of the forest in the administration of adjacent land: The bodies of pure lodgepole pine which are under consideration for elimination are adjacent to and very much intermingled with bodies of yellow pine within the National Forest. Now if this lodgepole pine land is eliminated and is not taken up and cared for, it will become a serious fire menace to the valuable yellow pine land. This will make the administration of the yellow pine land alone as costly as the present administration of both the lodgepole and yellow pine land. Insects - which already have a foothold in the region - can be most effectively controlled only by the administration of large contiguous areas by a single authority. It would be, therefore, most undesirable to have this lodgepole forest cast off by the Federal government and then not have it taken up by individuals who would care for it and administer it, and it seems likely that if eliminated such would be its ultimate future. Abandonment of such a block of country would be most undesirable, on account of the spread of fire, of insects, and of trespass, etc. But large timber companies would not be interested in acquiring and, protecting inferior land of this kind, and the State has no organization to care for it. It is not, therefore, the economic duty of some part of the Federal government to look after it, to protect it for the use of future generations, and to prevent its further deterioration. The Federal government is, in short, the logical guardian of these lodgepole flats, because from an administrative standpoint they go naturally with the adjacent large areas of National Forest on the hills.

In many places the exploitation of the valuable timber on the hills within the National Forest demands the use of some of the lodgepole flat for mill sites, logging roads, etc., and the wholesale elimination of the flat would actually embarrass the administration of the hill lands.

Recommendations.

In presenting my opinion as to the administrative duty of the Forest Service in handling this portion of the Deschutes and Paulina Forests, it is convenient to assume two cases.

Case I. Assuming that the land has no agricultural value under present economic conditions:

I would urgently recommend its retention within the National Forest, since I believe that in this way it will serve its highest use to the community and the country at large through all time. The following points should be considered:

1. Against an agricultural value to the individual of zero, we have a positive value to the public if held in National Forest of (a) a small present value of timber, (b) considerable prospective value of future timber crops, (c) possible value as protective forest, (d) considerable value for administrative purposes in connection with adjacent portions of National Forest. These public benefits cannot all be reckoned in dollars and cents, but the whole conservation policy is based on the assumption that they are real and that the care of land of this kind is a function of government well worth while.

It the land is non-agricultural, what possible value has it for the individual that would necessitate its elimination? I can see no real reasons, except to stimulate wild cat land speculation. If it is agricultural, that is quite another matter.

2. Were the Forest Service to eliminate now these lands from the National Forest, it would be taken by the public as an endorsement of their agricultural value. If the land is classed as non-agricultural, would not this elimination be wrong? Is it not a legitimate province of the Federal government, when administrative measures make it possible and lawful, to direct the stream of settlement so that the homeseekers - who are often not intelligent in the selection of their land - will not settle on land which is not capable of supporting their families in decency? The misguided settlement of inferior land results in degeneracy within a few generations, as it has, for example, in the Southern Appalachian Mts.

3. If the land is non-agricultural, I can see no good that would accrue to the public from its elimination unless it be the temporary "boom" which, being foundationless, would in the long run be harmful to the community.

4. This region seems to fulfill the purpose for which the National Forests were created as truly as much of the National Forest land of the country.

5. It is naturally and inevitably a sterile region of low producing power, but its negative or negligible cash value at the present time as a forest property should not be an argument for its elimination, particularly in view of no positive use for other purposes if eliminated.

It is comparable to some of the land within the public forests of the Old World, where the utilization of all land is more intensive than here, but where the economic balance has been reached and land such as this has been proven to serve its highest use as a forest. This lodgepole pine covered pumice flats are also closely comparable (except for a colder climate) to some of the jack pine sand flats of the East, on which agriculture has been tried unsuccessfully repeatedly, and which have finally reverted to brush or forest. Areas such as these pumice flats, i.e., land with poor soil, poor climate, and poor natural vegetation, is now being bought back by the eastern states for forest reserves.

Does not the example of these older regions indicate the lack of wisdom, the bad economics of encouraging or allowing settlement on land which is not truly agricultural?

Case II. Assuming that the agricultural value of these lodgepole-covered pumice flats is still indeterminate or questionable:

Under these circumstances, I would still recommend against its elimination from the National Forest for the present. I firmly believe that such a course would be the wisest for the following reasons, which are supplementary to the ones given in Case I:

1. In this region there are a hundred thousand acres or more in private ownership exactly comparable to the land in the proposed elimination, which may be used as proving ground to demonstrate whether this land is agricultural or not. This private land is in large blocks and well situated, so that the present boundaries of the National Forest in no wise interfere with attempts at extensive agriculture by the present owners. The Cary Act project which has been under construction for the past two years, should be completed before long, and if it is, it will make in the heart of this region an excellent place to demonstrate its agricultural possibilities.
2. It is wiser to delay action for five, or even ten years, until the question of agricultural value is settled, than for the government to hastily eliminate what possibly could never be regained, were it found after all to be wiser or better statesmanship to hold the land in public ownership.
3. The pressure of the local community for the elimination of this land need not be taken very seriously or considered to be wholly reasonable. It is very local and prompted wholly by selfish motives. While the present day wishes of the local inhabitants must be given consideration, they are subordinate to the all time welfare of the whole commonwealth and country. The clamor for elimination, moreover, is very artificial; it is instigated openly by those who desire to start a "boom" so that they can sell their lands and make money off of those who will flock into the country upon the announcement of an elimination from the National Forest. Land won't sell freely in this region now without a boom – but this is not due, as the local residents like to say, to the fact that a part of the region is "locked up" in the National Forest. There is no doubt but that an elimination from the National Forest would bring a local "boom", and consequent temporary prosperity to the land companies, townsite companies, hotel keepers, store keepers, locators, and land owners that want to sell and move out, liverymen, etc. But unless this land is absolutely of practical value for agriculture under present methods of farming, the ultimate purchaser (or homesteader) would be the loser and the community would be poorer and worse off than it is now. This desire for a boom is a sufficient cause for the clamor for the elimination, but it is no argument at all for the justice or wisdom of an elimination.
4. It is sometimes urged that since the people are the government, and the government is maintaining the National Forests for the people, if the only people who are voicing these sentiments in the matter want the area eliminated, the government should

eliminate it. But the people who are doing the talking are a relatively small proportion of the people who would be affected directly or indirectly, but who are silent. Whether this land is proper to be held within the National Forest is a question which should be judged solely on its merits. But since the people are the government, the expediency of a move such as this as an administrative measure must be considered as to its reactionary effect.

I feel that the elimination of this land would place the government's policy toward holding certain classes of land within the National Forest in an embarrassingly inconsistent position, in view of the facts as to the value of the land for National Forest purposes, in view of the slim evidence as to any possible agricultural value, and the scanty and superficial reason for its elimination. It would doubtless temporarily satisfy and quiet a local clamor, but it is not necessarily an object of a paternal government's administration to superficially "please" a community, but rather to do what is best for it in the long run. An elimination in this region without proved sound reasons would doubtless be the seed for more unrest and clamor from land speculators for other parts of the National Forests; for the public, like a spoiled child, is quick to take advantage of vacillation in policy or leniency of administration of its superior authority.

(signed) Thornton T.Munger